



NEWSLETTER

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2026! With the first months of the year already behind us, we are pleased to share some updates. In this issue, we present Elisabeth Gerling's doctoral research on how responsibility is constructed in digital health communication and how these patterns can be analyzed at scale using computational methods.

We also report on our contribution to the 71st Annual DGPUK Conference in Dortmund, where we examined media coverage of digital self-management for chronic diseases. In addition, we look back on our Academic Writing Retreat in the Harz Mountains and our Annual Meeting in Munich, two occasions that offered valuable space for focused work, exchange, and future planning.

Finally, we invite you to join our upcoming research colloquium and share a preview of events in the coming months. As always, thank you for staying connected. We are glad to have you with us!

Warm regards,



Constanze Rossmann

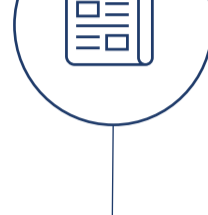
LMU Munich, Spokesperson of the DISELMA Research Unit



DISELMA contribution to the 71st Annual DGPUK Conference 2026 "Self-Management and Sentiments - Topics and Sentiments in Media Coverage of Digital Self-Management of Chronic Diseases"

© Image by Hans-Bredow-Institut

We are pleased to share that Franca Singh and Julia Metag from the University of Münster presented their research at the 71st Annual Conference of the German Communication Association (DGPUK) 2026 in Dortmund on March 20, 2026. Their presentation "Self-Management and Sentiments - Topics and Sentiments in Media Coverage of Digital Self-Management of Chronic Diseases" explored how digital self-management technologies for chronic illnesses are addressed in the public media discourse.



The study analyzed 27,423 media articles on diabetes, asthma, and COPD from widely circulated German media outlets published between 2010 and 2025. Using Structural Topic Modeling and automated sentiment analysis, the researchers examined which themes dominate media reporting and how emotionally these topics are framed.



The results show that digital self-management appears as a distinct topic primarily in coverage of diabetes. Over time, the sentiment toward digital diabetes self-management technologies has shifted from initially negative to increasingly positive. In addition, the analysis revealed differences between media types: while traditional media outlets tend to provide more balanced coverage, social media, particularly Instagram, features considerably more positive portrayals, often highlighting success stories and positive user experiences.



These findings highlight the complex ways in which digital health technologies are negotiated in public discourse and underline the role of media in shaping perceptions of technology-supported chronic disease management.

Annual Meeting 2026 in Munich

In March, the DISELMA research unit gathered in Munich for its Annual Meeting, a three-day event dedicated to exchange, collaboration, and planning future research activities. The meeting opened with PhD presentations by Nariman Sawalha, Franca Singh, Elisabeth Gerling, and Rebecca Kammerer, providing an overview of the current progress of doctoral projects. The app monitoring session shared findings from the first eight measurement waves, focusing on broader developments in the app market as well as the ongoing evolution of existing offerings. The day concluded with parallel meetings of principal investigators and research associates, followed by informal exchange over dinner. Day two focused on project updates from IP1-IP6. Building on the progress made so far, we explored ideas for future research directions and collaboration. These discussions were continued in the concept groups – Use, Framing, and Network – which worked on further aligning perspectives and identifying shared priorities. The final day addressed organizational and strategic matters, including upcoming activities such as the upcoming Conference of the DGPUK Health Communication Division in Chemnitz and a planned stakeholder workshop in 2027. Additional time was dedicated to advancing the follow-up proposal and to bilateral exchanges between project members. Overall, the meeting provided a constructive space for exchange and planning. We look forward to continuing these discussions and developing the next phase of DISELMA together.



Academic Writing Retreat in the Harz Mountains: Focus, Flow, and Fresh Perspectives

16-20 February 2026 | St. Andreasberg, Harz Mountains – Five days of focused writing, fresh perspectives, and snowy walks in the Harz: our Academic Writing Retreat brought new momentum to dissertations, articles, and collaborative exchange.

Together with PhD researchers from our DISELMA research unit and colleagues from related teaching areas at the universities in Munich and Chemnitz, we spent five inspiring days at an Academic Writing Retreat in the snowy Harz Mountains. Our home for the week was the historic KOFA 1895 – Königliche Oberförsterei Andreasberg, a beautifully restored former forestry lodge nestled in the winter landscape of St. Andreasberg.

Guided by writing coach and systemic consultant Dr. Silke Martin, the retreat offered a balanced program of structured input, individual coaching, and focused writing time. Each day included a workshop addressing key aspects of academic writing: identifying writing types, understanding writing phases, working with productive routines, and practicing constructive, positive feedback. A particular highlight was the opportunity for individual coaching sessions with Dr. Martin. These conversations allowed each participant to reflect on their own writing process, uncover the roots of potential writing blocks, and develop practical strategies to move forward with clarity and confidence. Equally valuable were the extended, distraction-free writing sessions. Working side by side in a supportive group setting, interspersed with walks



through the snow-covered landscape and shared meals, created an inspiring and creative atmosphere. The group brought together a wide range of writing projects: from dissertation chapters to handbook contributions and journal publications. Despite the diversity of topics, we shared common challenges and benefited immensely from exchanging perspectives and experiences. By the end of the retreat, our texts had progressed significantly – but more importantly, so had our understanding of our individual writing processes. We returned not only with stronger drafts, but with renewed motivation, practical tools, and a shared commitment to sustain these practices beyond the retreat.

We would like to sincerely thank Dr. Silke Martin for her thoughtful guidance and dedicated support throughout the retreat. You can learn more about her work on her website [here](#). We are excited to continue implementing what we learned, individually and as a research community. Happy writing!

PhD Projects IN DISELMA

Managing a chronic illness is rarely just a medical challenge. It is also a question of responsibility: who is expected to act, adapt, and cope? My dissertation investigates how responsibility for health is constructed across the many forms of digital health communication that shape public understanding today, from organizational websites and institutional reports to social media and patient-facing information platforms. Using a critical lens, I ask whether responsibility for health is framed as something individuals must carry alone, or as a shared societal task.



Elisabeth Gerling
Freie Universität Berlin
Individual Project:
Organizations



How can we trace responsibility in digital health communication?

What makes this project methodologically exciting is how I approach that question at scale. I use web scraping to collect a large corpus of German health organisational texts, and I am currently fine-tuning XLM-ROBERTa, a multilingual transformer model, using Low-Rank Adaptation (LoRA) to automatically classify how responsibility is framed across thousands of texts. The classifier will recognise whether health responsibility is attributed to the individual, to organisations and communities, or to systemic and societal actors. Once trained and validated, the classifier can be applied to any German health text, offering a scalable, reproducible, and comparable tool for answering critical questions about power and responsibility in health communication at a large scale. If you are interested in this research or would like to discuss related topics, you are welcome to get in touch with me via elisabeth.gerling@fu-berlin.de.

UPCOMING

for the next months



Join us for DISELMA's upcoming Scientific Research Colloquium

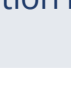
„Improving Weight-Related Behaviors through Digital Technology: Potential and Pitfalls“



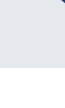
Friday, April 24, 2026



Language: English



11 am (CEST)



Digital via Zoom

Prof. Laura König
University of Vienna

Your seat at the research colloquium is just a click away. Click the Zoom link on the right to join us! No registration needed.

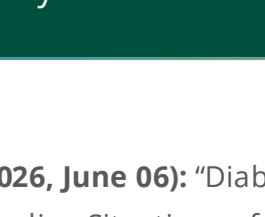


11. Jahrestagung der DGPUK-Fachgruppe Gesundheitskommunikation in Chemnitz

Gesundheit neu vernetzt:

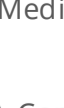
Von A wie Algorithmen bis Z wie Zyklus-Tracking

11.-13. November 2026

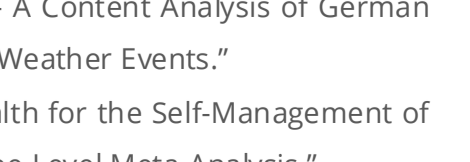


Submit your paper today!

We look forward to your contribution!



Call for Papers



Brill, Karnowski & Wiedicke (2026, June 06): "Diabetes, Devices and Daily Life: Understanding Situations of Mobile Media Use in Chronic Disease Self-Management."
Sing & Metag (2026, June 07): "In Sickness and in Heat – A Content Analysis of German Media Coverage of Chronic Diseases and Climate-Related Weather Events."
Sawalha, Lux & Rossmann (2026, June 08): "Mobile Health for the Self-Management of Diabetes: A Framework-Based Systematic Review and Three-Level Meta-Analysis."

06 - 08 JUNE

